

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated November 17, 2004. Claims 51 to 110 are now pending in the application, with Claims 1 to 50 having been cancelled herein. Claims 51, 57, 63, 69, 75, 81, 87, 93, 99 and 105 are now the independent claims herein. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 1 to 4, 7, 8, 10 to 14, 17 to 20, 23 to 26, 29, 36, 43 and 47 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,327,049 (Ohtsuka), Claims 5, 6, 9, 15, 16, 21, 22, 27 and 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Ohtsuka in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,378,070 (Chan), and Claims 30 to 35, 37 to 42, 44 to 46 and 48 to 50 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Ohtsuka in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,956,698 (Lacheze). Inasmuch as the rejected claims have been cancelled, the rejections are believed to be obviated. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested. Moreover, Applicants submit that newly-added Claims 51 to 110 are believed to be allowable over the art of record for at least the reasons set forth below.

The present invention concerns payment for print services. According to one aspect of the invention, when a print job request is submitted for printing and the job is accepted, a use fee is calculated for use of the print service. The amount of the use fee is based on whether the print job request is accepted by a server, or whether the print job request is accepted directly by a printer, where the use fee differs based on which one accepted the print job. As a result, only one use fee can be charged to the user, particularly

where the job may be accepted by the server and then transmitted to a print shop, in which case two use fees are normally associated with the job.

Referring specifically to the claims, newly-added independent Claim 51 is a print system which provides a print service for printing an electronic document in response to a print request that includes designation of the electronic document to be printed, the print system comprising an accepting unit, adapted to accept a print job request, and a computing unit, adapted to compute a use fee for the print service, wherein, if the print job request is accepted via a server apparatus, the computing unit computes the use fee for the print service on the basis of a first billing rate, and if the print job request is accepted directly by a printer, the computing unit computes the use fee for the print service on the basis of a second billing rate, wherein the first billing rate differs from the second billing rate.

Newly-added independent Claims 57, 63, 69 and 75 are method, server apparatus, storage medium, and program claims, respectively, that substantially correspond to Claim 51.

The art of record, alone or in any permissible combination, is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of newly-added Claims 51, 57, 63, 69 and 75, and in particular, is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of computing a use fee for a print service on the basis of a first billing rate if a print job request is accepted directly by a printer, and computing the use fee for the print service on the basis of a second billing rate if the print job request is accepted by a server apparatus, wherein the first billing rate differs from the second billing rate.

Ohtsuka is seen to disclose a system in which a user terminal 5, laboratory systems 2a, 2b and 2c, and a template server 1 are mutually connected through the Internet

10. The user terminal 5 receives a low-resolution template and low-resolution image data from an order receiving center 7. Then, the user performs processing on the received data at the user terminal 5 and places an order and transmits the processed data as low-resolution data to the order center. However, fees are based on the order that is placed, regardless of which route the print job is submitted by. That is, Ohtsuka is not seen to charge different rates for the order based on whether the order is submitted directly to a printer or is submitted via a server apparatus. Thus, Ohtsuka is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of computing a use fee for a print service on the basis of a first billing rate if a print job request is accepted directly by a printer, and computing the use fee for the print service on the basis of a second billing rate if the print job request is accepted by a server apparatus, wherein the first billing rate differs from the second billing rate.

Chan is merely seen to disclose a secure printing system in which a local computer 100, a directory server 120, a document store 130, a printer 140, and a billing system 150 are connected via network 110. The user can be billed for submitting an encrypted document to the document store, storing the document in the store for a specified time, and for successful transmission and printing of the document. Thus, while the user may be charged different amounts for different services, Chan is not seen to disclose or to suggest that the user is charged different rates depending on which device accepts the print job request. Specifically, Chan, like Ohtsuka, is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of computing a use fee for a print service on the basis of a first billing rate if a print job request is accepted directly by a printer, and computing the use fee for the print

service on the basis of a second billing rate if the print job request is accepted by a server apparatus, wherein the first billing rate differs from the second billing rate.

Lacheze is merely seen to disclose a billing system 330 that applies a discount based on the number of copies exceeding a given page count level. The system can notify the user that the number will exceed the given page count level if printing were to continue as is. However, Lacheze, like Ohtsuka and Chan, is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of computing a use fee for a print service on the basis of a first billing rate if a print job request is accepted directly by a printer, and computing the use fee for the print service on the basis of a second billing rate if the print job request is accepted by a server apparatus, wherein the first billing rate differs from the second billing rate.

In view of the foregoing deficiencies of the art of record, newly-added independent Claims 51, 57, 63, 69 and 75, as well as the claims dependent therefrom, are believed to be allowable.

In a related aspect of the invention according to newly-added independent Claims 81, 87, 93, 99 and 105, a discount rate is applied to a user's billing based on use of the print service. In more detail, user identification information and use information on use of the print service by the user are associated with one another, and based on the use information, a discount rate is dynamically determined and applied to the user. As a result, different discount rates can be applied to each individual user, depending on how much the user uses the print service of any particular print shop. Thus, the user is provided with an incentive to continuously use the same print shop so as to gain a higher discount rate.

Referring specifically to the claims, newly-added independent Claim 81 is a print system which provides a print service for printing an electronic document in response

to a print request that includes designation of the electronic document to be printed, the print system comprising a managing unit, adapted to manage user identification information for identifying a user requesting the print service and use information on use results of the print service used by the user, wherein the user information and the use information are related to each other, a determination unit, adapted to dynamically determine a discount rate of a billing rate for the print service on the basis of the use information managed by the managing means on use results of the print service used by the user, and a computing unit, adapted to compute a settlement amount for the print service in accordance with the discount rate determined by the determination unit.

Newly-added independent Claims 87, 93, 99 and 105 are method, server apparatus, storage medium, and program claims, respectively, that substantially correspond to Claim 81.

The art of record, alone or in any permissible combination, is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of newly-added independent Claims 81, 87, 93, 99 and 105, and in particular, is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of managing user identification information and use information on use results of a print service by a user, and dynamically determining a discount rate of a billing rate for the print service on the basis of the managed use information on the use results of the print service used by the user.

Ohtsuka and Chan are not seen to disclose anything with regard to determining a discount rate, much less dynamically determining a discount rate of a billing rate for the print service on the basis of the managed use information on the use results of the print service used by the user.

Lacheze, while disclosing the application of a discount to a user if a page count exceeds a given amount, is not seen to disclose how such a discount is determined. Moreover, it can readily be seen that any such discount amount applied to the user is set in advance to be the same for all users. Thus, the discount rate is not dynamically determined for each user, and is not determined based on use information on use results for the print service used by the user. Accordingly, Lacheze is not seen to add anything that, when combined with Ohtsuka and/or Chan, would have resulted in dynamically determining a discount rate of a billing rate for the print service on the basis of the managed use information on the use results of the print service used by the user.

In view of the foregoing deficiencies of the art of record, newly-added independent Claims 81, 87, 93, 99 and 105, as well as the claims dependent therefrom, are believed to be in condition for allowance.

No other matters having been raised, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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